

6

5 7 5 4



THE CALL
OF
MOTHERLAND

g the Undelivered Presidential
Speech of

C. R. Das

For

Ahmedabad Congress

With a short introduction by

MAHATMA GANDHI

INDIAN BOOK CLUB

College Street Market,

CALCUTTA.

reserved.

Price Four Annas.

No. 575	
Class No.	323.2
Date	8th
Class.	
Cat.	
Bk. Card	
Checked	OSA

Published by
SUKUMAR RANJAN DAS, M. A.

January, 1922.

AND

Printed by
The Oriental Printers & Publishers, Ltd.
40, Machua Bazar Street, Calcutta.

Mahatmaji's Introduction.

I must apologise to the public for the delay in issuing Deshabandhu Das's presidential address. It was received by me in a fragmentary condition with instructions to revise it and put it in shape. The reader will be glad to learn that beyond restoring one sentence which had been ruled out and adding one to complete a thought and beyond slight verbal immaterial alterations, the address is being printed as received. I see from the sentences ruled out in the original that Deshabandhu's intention was to give a review of the year's work and his considered opinion in detail of Non-co-operation. But sufficient appears in the printed text to enable us to know his opinion. We know it too from his emphatic and stirring messages to the country just before he was silenced. In appreciating the address the reader will be helped to know that it was prepared just before his arrest. The reader will not fail to note the marked self-restraint with which the ad-

dress is prepared and also the fact that Deshabandhu believes in non-violence as his final creed. That the only use the Government has for such a man is to put him in prison is about the greatest condemnation it can pronounce upon itself.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Mr. Chairman of the Reception Committee and Delegates of the Indian National Congress :—

We have arrived at a critical stage in our struggle with the Bureaucracy and it behoves us, every one of us, to search our hearts and to ask ourselves the question, "Do I stand for India in her present struggle?" is because I stand for India that I have responded to your unanimous call to-day. I thank you for your confidence in me but I warn you that I have no worldly wisdom to offer you. I come from a city which has felt the full force of the wrath of the Government. Measures for stifling political life have been taken, as I believe, in order to coerce the people to receive His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; but it is the imprisoned soul of Calcutta that will greet His Royal Highness on the 24th December. I come from the struggle which has just begun in Calcutta chastened and purified

and, if I have no worldly wisdom to give, I at least bring before you unbounded enthusiasm, and a resolute determination to see this struggle through.

I think that at the very outset we ought to define our attitude in relation to the present struggle. What is our aim? Whither are we going? I think that most people will agree that we are out to secure freedom from foreign subjection, freedom from foreign interference. It is as well, however, that we should have a clear grasp of what is meant by the word "Freedom." In the first place it does not imply absence of all restraint. When I am forbidden to steal my neighbour's purse or to trespass on my neighbour's land there is necessarily a restraint on my action, but there is no opposition between freedom and such restraint as has the sanction of the people behind it. In the second place, freedom does not necessarily imply absence of the idea of dependence. Dependence there must be so long as we live in society and need the protection of society and there is no necessary opposition between freedom and such dependence as is willingly suffered by the people. But though there is no necessary opposition between freedom and restraint and freedom and dependence, it must be re-

membered that restraint that does not deny freedom can only be such restraint as has the sanction of the people behind it ; and dependence consistent with freedom can only be such dependence as is willingly suffered by the people for its own protection.

WHAT IS FREEDOM ?

What then is freedom ? It is impossible to define the term ; but one may describe it as that state, that condition, which makes it possible for a nation to realize its own individuality and to evolve its own destiny. The history of mankind is full of stirring stories as to how nations have struck for freedom in order to keep their nationalism and their individuality inviolate and untarnished. To take only modern instances, one may refer to Finland and Poland, Ireland, Egypt and India. Each of these nations has offered a determined resistance to the imposition of a foreign culture upon it. The history of these nations has run on parallel lines. First, there is the protest against cultural conquest ; secondly, there is the desire for national education ; and lastly, there is the demand for its recognition as a separate organism with the power to work out its own

destiny without any hindrance from any foreign power.

We stand then for freedom, because we claim the right to develop our own individuality and evolve our own destiny along our own lines, unembarrassed by what Western civilisation has to teach us and unhampered by the institutions which the West has imposed on us. But here a voice interrupts me, the voice of Ravindranath, the poet of India. He says, "The Western culture is standing at our door, must we be so inhospitable as to turn it away or ought we not to acknowledge that in the union of the cultures of the East and the West is the salvation of the world?" I admit that if Indian nationalism has to live, it cannot afford to isolate itself from other nations but I have two observations to make to the criticism of Ravindranath ;—first, we must have a house of our own before we can receive a guest ; and secondly, Indian culture must discover itself before it can be ready to assimilate Western culture. In my opinion, there can be no true assimilation before freedom comes, although there may be, as there has been, a slavish imitation. The cultural conquest of India is all but complete ; it was the inevitable result of her political conquest. India must resist it.

She must vibrate with national life and then we may talk of the union of the two civilizations.

AN OBJECTION

I must dispose of another objection, this time, of my Moderate friends. "You concede," I hear them say, "that freedom is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, the end being control ; why not work out your destiny within the British Empire ?" My answer is that so long as India occupies the position of a dependent in the British Empire, so long the task cannot be undertaken. Go into the villages, the heart of India, and see the life that is lived by the average Indian. They are sturdy men and fearless men, they are men of whom any country could be proud ; but the degradation that must inevitably follow subjection is writ large on their brow, and their lot is made up of caste troubles, petty squabbles, and endless pursuit of litigation for litigation's sake. Where are now the institutions that made them self-dependent and self-contained ? Where is the life that enabled them to earn their livelihood and yet left them free to worship the God of their fathers ? I assert that once a nation passes into subjection, degeneration must inevitably set in attacking the

very life blood of that nation. Its effect is to be seen not in this sphere or that sphere but in every sphere of the nation's activity. Economically, the British rule has had a disastrous effect on our national well-being. Mr. R.C. Dutt and after him Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya have shown how deliberately the destruction of our national industry, the spinning and weaving industry, was planned. Who can contemplate with equanimity that every year many crores of rupees go out of India without corresponding advantage ? Morally, we are becoming a nation of slaves, and have acquired most vices of the slave. We speak the language of the master, and ape his manners ; and we rush with alacrity to adopt his institutions while our own institutions lie languishing in the villages. Intellectually, we have become willing victims to the imposition of a foreign culture on us ; and the humiliation is complete when we are deliberately breaking away from the past, recognising no virtue in its continuity. "But then," say my Moderate friends, "How can you hope to win freedom until you have elevated the people ?" If I am right in my diagnosis that the present condition of India, material, moral and intellectual, is the direct result of the foreign rule in India, then it must follow

that so long as our subjection continues, so long there is no hope of recovery. You may of course tackle side problems, as we are trying to do. You may infuse such enthusiasm amongst the people as may be of great assistance to you in your political campaigns. But, believe me, it is the disease that you must fight, and not the outward symptoms of the disease.

I object then to the perpetuation of British domination as in my opinion it is impossible to find the fulfilment of our nationality, our individuality, our personality so long as that domination continues. In arriving at this conclusion, I have entirely ignored the character of the British rule in India. That rule may be good or bad, it may be conceded that it is partly good and partly bad, but my conclusion is based on the view that there is inherent in subjection something which injures national life and hampers its growth and self-fulfilment. Whether within the Empire or outside it, India must have freedom so that she may realize her individuality and evolve her destiny without help or hindrance from the British people.

I now come to the question. What are the methods which we ought to adopt in our ght with the Bureaucracy.

There are three and only three methods that I know of,—(1) armed resistance, (2) co-operation with the Bureaucracy in the Councils that have been established under the Government of India Act, and (3) non-violent Non-co-operation. The first I must dismiss as 'beyond the range of practical politics. Even it were not so, on principle I am opposed to violence. We must then choose between Co-operation and Non-co-operation.

develop its own individuality and evolve its own destiny, has been recognised in the Act; secondly, whether the Act either expressly or by necessary implication gives even the beginning of responsible government to the Indian people, and, lastly, whether the legislature has any control, effective or otherwise, over the purse.

Now the preamble of the Act is the key to the situation, "Whereas it is the declared policy of Parliament." So the preamble runs—what is the declared policy of Parliament? To recognise the inherent right of the Indians to responsible government? Not at all. To recognise the inherent right of India to be treated as a free and equal partner of the commonwealth of nations known as the British Empire? Not at all. But

— ~~with~~ the attainment of our nationality, our individuality, our personality so long as that domination continues. In arriving at this conclusion, I have entirely ignored the character of the British rule in India. That rule may be good or bad, it may be conceded that it is partly good and partly bad, but my conclusion is based on the view that there is inherent in subjection something which injures national life and hampers its growth and self-fulfilment. Whether within the Empire or outside it, India must have freedom so that she may realize her individuality and evolve her destiny without help or hindrance from the British people.

I now come to the question. What are the methods which we ought to adopt in our fight with the Bureaucracy.

I confess that in considering the question of co-operation, I am not a little troubled by the fact that some of our leaders who assisted at the birth of political life in India are ranged against us on this question.

I, therefore, propose to consider some of the arguments that are advanced by the supporters of the Government of India Act; and, in doing so, I shall consider, first, whether the freedom of the Indian nation, that is to say, its right to develop its own individuality and evolve its own destiny, has been recognised in the Act; secondly, whether the Act either expressly or by necessary implication gives even the beginning of responsible government to the Indian people, and, lastly, whether the legislature has any control, effective or otherwise, over the purse.

Now the preamble of the Act is the key to the situation, "Whereas it is the declared policy of Parliament." So the preamble runs—what is the declared policy of Parliament? To recognise the inherent right of the Indians to responsible government? Not at all. To recognise the inherent right of India to be treated as a free and equal partner of the commonwealth of nations known as the British Empire? Not at all. But

mark the timid concession to the rights of India—"To provide for the increasing association of Indians in every branch of Indian administration, and for the gradual development of self-governing institutions, and with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in British India as an integral part of the Empire." I do not think a more halting concession could ever be made to the rights of a people. Now is there anything in the preamble to compel the British Parliament to recognise India, at any time, as a free and equal partner of the British Empire? I think not. "Progressive realization of responsible government in British India"—These are vague words, and they will not at any time tax the ingenuity of a British statesman. Omitting the second paragraph and coming to the third, we find that the time and manner of each advance can be determined only by Parliament upon whom responsibility lies for the welfare and advancement of the Indian peoples. Mark the word "peoples," not "people," an assertion by Parliament that India is not one, but many. I, for one, am not prepared to submit to the insult offered to India in the third paragraph of the preamble, and I am bound to offer a valiant opposition to it.

We are quite prepared to undertake the responsibility for the welfare and advancement of the Indian people (not peoples), and I altogether deny that a foreign Parliament can possibly discharge its responsibilities in relation to a subject nation. I resent the doctrine that Parliament is to determine the time and manner of each advance, and I say that the whole object of the legislation as disclosed in the third paragraph of the preamble, is to perpetuate the domination of the British Parliament which I cannot for a moment accept. The fourth paragraph holds out a distinct threat. "And whereas the action of Parliament," so it says, "in such matters must be guided by the co-operation received from those on whom new opportunities of service will be conferred, and by the extent to which it is found that confidence can be reposed in their sense of responsibility." In other words, if we are good, and if we satisfy the British Parliament that we have a sense of responsibility, then the British Parliament will consider whether we ought not to have a further instalment of reforms. In other words we are perpetual infants, and the British Parliament is our sole guardian.

I have very great respect for the opinion of my political opponents, but I cannot accept the

fundamental principle on which the Reforms are based. I think that we should preserve our self-esteem, whatever the stage of our progress may be. I think that we should solemnly declare, in open Congress, that Freedom is inherent in every nation and that India has and possesses the right to develop her own individuality and to evolve her own destiny unhampered by what the British Parliament has decided or may decide for us. I think that we should recognize that any power that in any way hampers or embarrasses the self-realization and self-fulfilment of the Indian nation is an enemy of India and must, as such, be resisted. I am willing to co-operate with England but on one condition only, that she recognizes this inherent right of India. That recognition you will not find anywhere in the Government of India Act, and I, for one, will not be a party to the perpetuation of British domination in India. But my Moderate friends tell me that though the freedom of the Indian people, in the sense in which I understand the term, has not been recognised in the Act of Parliament, still if we work the Reforms, it will not be in the power of Parliament to deny us freedom, I do not doubt the wisdom of my friends nor deny their patriotism ; but the

question, in my opinion, is entirely irrelevant. My position is this, that however willing I may be to enter into a compromise with the English Government in matters of detail, and I am willing to make great sacrifices, I will not enter into any compromise on the question which I hold to be fundamental. Freedom is my birthright, and I demand a recognition of that right, not by instalments nor in compartments, but whole and entire. I do not doubt that victory will be on our side. But supposing we fail, we would at least have preserved inviolate our national self-respect and dignity. We would at any rate have repudiated the insult on which the Government of India Act is based. The difference between the Indian National Congress and the Ministers who are working the Reform Act seems to me to be fundamental, in that it has its eye fixed on the ultimate and would reject as essentially false anything that does not recognize the freedom of the Indian people, whereas the Ministers have their eyes fixed on the departments of which they are in charge, and hope to attain freedom through the successful working of those departments.

I will now consider whether the Act gives even the beginning of responsible government to

India, and whether the Legislature has any control over the purse. The two questions must be considered together. It is the view of the Moderates in Bengal that out of seven members of the Bengal Government, five are Indians. The view is entirely erroneous. I think I am right in saying that provinces are governed, in relation to reserved subjects, by the Governor in Council, and in relation to transferred subjects, by the Governor acting with the Ministers. The statute makes no provision whatever for the joint deliberation by the Governor and his Council and his Ministers sitting together, except in regard to proposals for taxation and borrowing, and the framing of proposals for expenditure of public money. In regard to the reserved subjects—and these are the subjects which are of vital importance to us as a nation in our struggle for political liberty,—the Ministers have no voice whatever. I think I am right in saying that they are the dumb spectators of the fight that is now going on between us and the Government. They are not part of the Government to consider whether, in relation to the Non-co-operation movement, a repressive policy should or should not be initiated in the country. Their advice will not be sought when

the Local Government has to consider the question whether Mahatma Gandhī ought or ought not to be arrested. If I am right in my view as to the position of subjects, then I suggest to my Moderate friends that they are under an entire misapprehension when they say that the majority of the members of the Government are Indians. The truth is that, in relation to the Reserved Subjects, the Indian element is in a minority and cannot affect the policy of the Government in the slightest degree, provided the Governor and the English members of the Council combine against it.

I have now to consider the position of the Ministers and the relation between the Ministers and the Legislature in regard to the Transferred Subjects. My first point is, that it is a mistake to suppose that any "subject" has been transferred to the Ministers. I concede that certain departments have been transferred, but I maintain that they have been transferred, subject to the encumbrances created by a century of bureaucratic rule, and the Ministers have no power whatever to discharge those encumbrances. I will at once make my meaning clear. Now, medical administration is an important department of the State ; and so is public health. These departments, I

understand, have been transferred to the Ministers, and the Minister, provided he has complete control of the "subject" is in a position to confer a lasting benefit on the community. But what is the position? The Minister has no effective control over the officers who run these departments, and no voice whatever in the selection of his own officers. It is a peculiar circumstance in the history of the bureaucratic rule in India that, whenever the people have tried for something essential to their existence, the Government has given them expensive administration, expensive offices and expensive buildings instead. The test whether the "subject" has been transferred to the Minister is this : Is the Minister for health under the law in a position to take up this attitude, "I will recast the whole system under which these departments have hitherto been administered. I will abolish the Indian Medical Service, and employ local agencies who would know how to disinfect a well and what steps to take in the case of an epidemic. I will then have more money to spend on the needs of the people." But, no ! This attitude the Act denies to him, and yet it is said that the subject has been transferred to him. One of the Ministers in India described his posi-

tion in bitter terms in the course of a debate in the Council. He complained that if he applies to the Medical department or the Sanitary department for doctors to meet an emergency, they say to him in reply, "We have no doctors." If he takes the responsibility of sending doctors to the affected area, the Medical department says to him, "We do not recognise your doctors, and you must pay them out of your own pockets." When I point out to you that the Minister in question is the Minister in charge of the Medical department and Sanitary department, you will grasp the full significance of the "transfer of subjects" that has taken place under the Act. Well might a Minister exclaim, as one actually did, "Silver and gold have I none, out of such as I have I give unto thee, that is, sympathy" He added that he could only give sympathy, because the purse was held by somebody else, that is to say, the Finance Member.

This brings me to a question of great importance, and that is, whether the legislature has any control over the purse. The Moderates maintain the affirmative of the proposition; I maintain the negative. I shall presently refer to the provisions of the Act to support my position; but I

have a witness of undoubted position and respectability in my favour, whose evidence I should like to place before you. In the course of the general discussion on the budget in one of the Councils, a Minister said as follows : "The two poor men who have been put down here as Ministers are presumed to be clothed with all the powers of Ministers in the House of Commons, and therefore they are called upon to account for everything for which perhaps a Minister in the House of Commons is responsible.....The Minister here begins his life by getting a dole of money that is given by those who are in charge of the whole administration" The question is whether the Moderates are right or the Minister in question is right. Both may be wrong ; but both cannot be right.

Under the rules framed under the Government of India Act, the framing of proposals for expenditure in regard to Transferred and Reserved subjects is a matter of agreement between the Members of the Executive Council and the Ministers ; but, if they do not agree as to the apportionment of funds between Reserved and Transferred departments respectively, the Governor has the power to allocate the revenue and balances

of the province between reserved and transferred subjects by specifying the fractional proportion of the revenues and balances which shall be assigned to each class of subject. What, then, is the position ? The Moderates proudly assert that majority of the members of the Government, five, are Indians. If that were so, one would expect the question of apportionment to be decided in accordance with the view of the majority ; but that is not done, because the entire scheme is based on distrust of the Ministers. We have therefore this result that if the Members and the Ministers are unable to come to an agreement the matter is decided by the Governor who may act, either in accordance with his own discretion or in accordance with the report of an authority to be appointed by the Governor-General in this behalf on the application of the Governor.

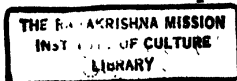
That is the impossible position in which the Minister is placed by the scheme framed under the Act ; but what is the position of the Council ? Has it any power to say, "We require the funds to be apportioned in the way we suggest, and not according to the proposal made by the Government ?" Can it say, "We require you to spend

so much to fight Malaria or so much for Primary education ?” The Act undoubtedly gives power to the Council to refuse its assent to a demand or to reduce the amount therein referred to either by a reduction of the whole grant or by the omission or reduction of any of the items of expenditure of which the grant is composed, but this is subject to an important proviso, viz., that the Local Government shall have power, in relation to any such demand, to act as if it had been assented to, notwithstanding the withholding of such assent or the reduction of the amount therein referred to, if the demand relates to a reserved subject, and the Governor certifies that the expenditure provided for by the demand is essential to the discharge of his responsibility for the subject. This, according to the Moderates, is the effective control which the Legislature has over the purse. It has no power whatever to say in what proportion the revenue of the country should be allocated between reserved and transferred departments respectively; it has no control whatever over the revenue allocated to the reserved subjects. All that it can do is to say to the Ministers, “We refuse our assent to your demand,” or “We reduce the amount

referred to in your demand either by a reduction of the whole grant or by the omission or reduction of any of the items of expenditure of which the grant is composed." It is ridiculous to describe the limited control exercisable by the Council in relation to the transferred subjects as "an effective control over the purse."

In administrative matters, the position of the Minister is no better. The Act provides that in relation to transferred subjects, the Governor shall be guided by the advice of his Minister, unless he sees sufficient cause to dissent from their opinion, in which case he may require action to be otherwise than in accordance with that advice. In a dispute between the Minister in charge of the department of health and his officer on a question of policy it is possible for Governor to support the officer against the Minister. In matters of legislation in relation to the transferred subjects, there is in theory some power in the legislature but in practice the Finance department, controlled by a member of the Executive Council, would have the last words on the subject; for I can conceive of no legislation which does not involve expenditure of money, and it is the duty of the Finance department

5,754



(of which, be it remembered, the Minister is not a Member) to examine and advise on the Scheme of the new expenditure for which it is proposed to make provision in the estimate.

In regard to the whole scheme, it is legitimate to ask, "Does it secure to the subject even the elementary rights which every citizen under any civilised government possesses?" Is repressive legislation impossible under the Act, except with the consent of the people? Does it give to the people the right to repeal the repressive legislation which disgraces the statute book in India? Has a repetition of the Punjab atrocities been made impossible? I think I am right in saying that, in regard to all these matters, the position is exactly the same as it was before the Reforms Act.

This, then, is the scheme which is being worked by the Ministers, and we have been solemnly assured by the Moderates that the beginning of Swaraj is to be found in the scheme. Much as I would like to end all unnecessary conflict, I cannot recommend to you the acceptance of the Act as a basis for co-operation with the Government. I will not purchase peace with dishonour, and so long as the preamble to the Government of India Act stands and our right, our inherent right, to regulate

our own affairs, develop our own individuality and evolve our own destiny is not recognised, I decline to consider any terms of peace.

The only other method of warfare open to us is Non-co-operation ; and that is the programme which we adopted at two successive Congresses. We are devoted to the doctrine of Non-co-operation, and you will not require me to discuss with you its ethics.

But there are friendly critics whose doubt we ought to dispel, if it is in our power to do. They say that the doctrine of Non-co-operation is a doctrine of negation, a doctrine of despair ; they stand aghast at the narrowness, the exclusiveness which such a doctrine implies ; and they draw out attention to the trend of political events in the world, and they ask us whether there is any hope for a nation that is determined to live a life of isolation.

I feel bound to answer the questions which have been raised by our friendly critics, and, in doing so, I must ask myself the question, "What is Non-co-operation ?" I find it easier to answer the question, "what is Non-co-operation" by considering for a moment what is not Non-co-operation. Non-co-operation is not a refusal to co-

operate with the English people because they are English people, Non-co-operation does not advocate a policy of separation, a policy of isolation. Indeed, in our conflict with the forces of injustice and unrighteousness, we are not for getting Him, to quote the words of Rabindra Nath, "who is without distinction of class or colours, and who with his varied Shakti makes true provision for the inherent need of each and every class." But before we can join the forces of the world in the missionary enterprise to uplift Humanity, it is at least necessary that we should find fulfilment in self-realization and self-development ; for it is only as a nation that has realized itself that we can hope to be of any service to Humanity. Let us consider the matter for a moment. Our philosophy recognizes that there is an essential unity behind all diversities and that these diversities, "Baichitrya" if I may use that expression, constitute the "Leela" of the Supreme Reality. The whole object of human endeavours, as I understand it, is to reconcile these endless diversities so as to affirm the Supreme Reality. God's "Leela" requires that each and every manifestation must have an unhampered growth. Every nation on the face of the earth represents such a manifestation. Like the

diverse flowers in a garden the nations must follow their own laws and work out their own destiny so that in the end they might each and all contribute to the life and culture of Humanity. In order that that Humanity may be served, the ultimate Unity realized, that essential something which distinguishes one nation from another, which I may describe as the individuality of the nation, must have unfettered growth. This is the essence of the doctrine of nationalism for which men have been ready to lay down their lives. Nationalism is not an aggressive assertion of its individuality distinct and separate from the other nations, but it is a yearning for self-fulfilment and self-determination and self-realization as a part of the scheme of the universal Humanity by which alone Humanity can fulfil itself, determine itself and realize itself. Non-co-operation, therefore, though it does not refuse co-operation with the English because they are English, will refuse to co-operate with any power or institution which embarrasses in any way the growth of the individuality of the Indian nation or hampers its self-fulfilment. Non-co-operation again does not reject western culture because it is western culture. But it recognizes that there must

be rejection in order that there may be whole-hearted acceptance. The cry for national education is not a protest against foreign education ; it was not so in Poland ; it was not so in Ireland ; it is not so in India. But it is a protest against the imposition of foreign culture on India. Subjection is hard to bear, whether it be political or cultural ; and indeed, as history shows, cultural subjection must inevitably follow in the wake of political subjection. Our desire for national education is only an endeavour to establish a continuity with the past and to enthrone our culture in our hearts. The doctrine that we preach does not exclude any light that may come from outside ; but we say to those who care to listen to us, "First light the lamp that lies neglected in your home ; look into the past and realise your present position in the light of the past ; and then face the world with courage and receive whatever light may come from outside."

What then is Non-co-operation ? I cannot do better than quote the eloquent words of Mr. Stokes ; "It is the refusal to be a party to preventable evil ; it is the refusal to accept or have any part in injustice ; it is the refusal to acquiesce in wrongs that can be righted, or to submit to a state of affairs which is manifestly inconsistent

with the dictates of righteousness. And as a consequence it is the refusal to work with those who on grounds of interest or expediency insist upon committing or perpetuating wrong."

But it is argued that the whole doctrine is a doctrine of negation, a doctrine of despair. I agree that in form the doctrine is one of negation, but I maintain that in substance it is one of affirmation. We break in order to build ; we destroy in order to construct ; we reject in order to accept. This is the whole history of human endeavours. If subjection be an evil, then we are bound to non-co-operate with every agency that seeks to perpetuate our subjection. That is a negation ; but it affirms our determination to be free, to win our liberty at any cost. Nor do I agree that the doctrine is one of despair. It is a doctrine of hope and of confidence and of unbounded faith in its efficacy. One has only to look at the faces of the sufferers as they are led to prison to realise that victory is already ours. It is not for nothing that Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali, courageous and resourceful, have lived and suffered. it is not for nothing that Lajpat Rai, one of the bravest of spirits that ever faced the sun, flung the order of the Bureaucracy in its face, and marched boldly into the

prison that awaited him. It is not for nothing that Moti Lal Nehru, that prince amongst men, spurned the riches that were his, and defied the order that would enslave him, refusing no pain that power could invent. Time will not permit me to read to you all the names that are inscribed in the roll of honour ; but I must not forget to mention the students, who are at once the hope and the glory of the Motherland. I, who have been privileged to watch the current of political life in its very centre, can testify to the wonderful courage and unflinching devotion displayed by the students. Theirs is the inspiration behind the movement, theirs the sacrifice, theirs the victory. They are the torch-bearers of the time ; they are the pilgrims on the road. If suffering has been their lot, victory is their due.

This, then, is the philosophy on which the Non-co-operation movement is based : to defy with absolute constancy the hostile powers that would hamper in any way our growth and self-fulfilment as a nation, to keep its evil always in view, not hating it, but recognizing the evil as an evil, and refusing no pain that power can invent. I admit, gentlemen, that the ideal is a very high one but I maintain that it is the only method which we

can adopt for the early establishment of Swaraj. It requires no wisdom to see that if every one of us withdraws our helping hand from the machine that is relentlessly working to prevent our growth and self-realization as a nation, the machine must of necessity stop its work. We are told, however, that once the machine of government stops its work, we shall be swept away by the forces of disorder and reaction. I think, gentlemen, that there is a simple answer to this argument. The Non-co-operation movement can never hope to succeed, unless our forces are properly organized and the ethics of the movement properly understood by the nation. If they are not understood, the question will not arise, for we cannot hope to carry the struggle to a successful termination ; but if they are understood, then the inherent strength of the movement will prevent anarchy and bloodshed. But I cannot disguise from myself the fact that there have been disturbances in Bombay in the course of our propaganda. We must accept responsibility for such disturbances and frankly admit that to the extent to which there has been violence, intimidation, and coercion, we have failed. But what is the remedy ? Surely not to abjure our faith, but to see that the faith is

5754
properly understood. Bloodshed and disorder have been associated with every great movement that has taken place, the spread of Christianity for instance. But is it to be argued that, because in the spread of a New Idea, there is danger of disorder and disturbance as it comes into conflict with old ideals and the old view of life, the missionaries must of necessity stay their hands and decline to carry the light? Such an argument is not worth a moment's consideration. You may argue if you like that our doctrine has not yet been understood by the people. You may argue that mass disobedience would be dangerous until the doctrine is really understood by the people. You may argue that our programme ought to be revised in the light of the disturbances which have taken place in Bombay. But the fact that disturbances have taken place is no argument against the essential truth of our movement. We must meet the situation with courage and devise means to prevent the recurrence of those disturbances ; but I cannot and I will not advise you to stay your hand from the Non-co-operation movement. The fact that India has remained calm in spite of the recent arrests shows that the Bombay lesson has gone home. The recent

manifestation of courage, endurance and remarkable self-control has in my opinion demonstrated the efficacy and the necessity of non-violent Non-cooperation. And nothing can stop our onward march if the same spirit is still further developed and retained to the end. 5754

IMPRESSION ON BUREAUCRACY.

Ladies and gentlemen, the success of our movement has made a deep impression on the Bureaucracy, if we may judge by the repressive policy which it has initiated and is carrying into effect. I observe that His Excellency the Viceroy objects to the policy being described as "repressive," but I have yet to know that the Seditious Meetings Act and the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act are part of the ordinary criminal law of the land. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, these were two of the Acts that were considered by the Committee appointed to examine repressive legislation. It is true that the Committee consisting of an Indian Chairman and six Indian Members out of eight were unable to recommend the repeal of these two Acts. They have only shown what confidence can be reposed in their sense of res-

possibility. But the fact remains that the Acts were treated as repressive laws and discussed as such. Lord Reading is obviously in error in suggesting, as he has done, that the arrests now being made in Calcutta and in other parts of India are under the ordinary criminal law of the land. His Excellency asserts that there are organized attempts to challenge the law, and he does not understand what purpose is served by flagrant breach of the law for the purpose of challenging the Government and in order to compel arrest. I would, with all respect, put one question to His Excellency. If Japan planted her national flag on Australia, and gave Australia such freedom and such constitution as we enjoy under Great Britain, neither more nor less, what would His Excellency's advice be to the Australians, if they were determined to win freedom at all costs ? And if Japan promulgated repressive laws without the sanction of the Australians, prohibiting meetings and declaring as unlawful all voluntary associations through which alone the Australians could hope to work for national regeneration, what would His Excellency's advice be to the Australians, supposing they solemnly agreed to defy such laws and disregard the orders issued under such laws ? I venture to

think that His Excellency does not understand the situation which has arisen in India ; therefore he is puzzled and perplexed. Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has adopted the policy of Non-co-operation as the only legitimate political weapon available for its use. That is not breaking the law. Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has decided to boycott foreign goods, and especially foreign cloth. That is not breaking the law. Rightly or wrongly, the Congress has decided to boycott the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. That is not breaking the law. Now, in what way is the Congress to carry on its work except through the voluntary organisations which you have proclaimed unlawful under the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act ? In striking at these voluntary organisations, you strike at the Congress propaganda which, you are bound to admit, is not unlawful. Why should it puzzle your Excellency, assuming you credit us with the same amount of patriotism which you have, that we have solemnly resolved to disobey your orders and court imprisonment ? I assert that it is you who have broken the law and not we. You have transgressed the law which secures to every subject freedom of speech and action, so long as the speech and the action do not offend against the

ordinary criminal law of the land. You have transgressed the law which secures to the subject the unrestricted right to hold meetings, so long as these meetings do not degenerate into unlawful assemblies. These are the common law rights of the subject which you have transgressed, and I would remind your Excellency that it is on the due observance of these elementary rights that the allegiance of the subject depends.

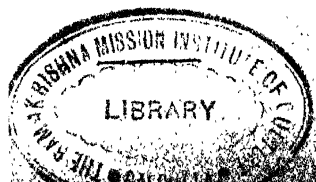
But then, it is said that these associations interfere with the administration of the law and order. If they do, then the ordinary criminal law is there, and it ought to be sufficient. I have heard of no instance of violence in Calcutta; certainly none was reported to the police. Charges of violence can be investigated, and therefore they were not made. But charges of threat and intimidation are easy to make, because they cannot be investigated. I would ask the authorities one question: "Was any case of threat or intimidation reported to the police? Has the local Government found, on enquiry, that quite apart from general allegations which can easily be made, there were specific cases of threat or intimidation practised by the no-co-operators on the "loyalists" of Calcutta?" An English Journalist, signing himself as "Nominis

"Umbra," gave us his opinion to an English paper in Calcutta that the hartal was willingly acquiesced in by the people. We read in "A Ditcher's Dairy" in Capital of the 24th November last, "The people surrendered at discretion, but it was impossible for a careful observer not to see that not only were they, for the most part, willing victims of new foolery, but also that they exulted in the discomfiture of the Sirkar." If that be so, then what case is there for the declaration under Sec. 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act? Was the position in Calcutta on the 17th November last worse than the position in England when a big strike is in progress? And is it suggested that there resides any power in the Cabinet of England to put down a strike and prevent picketting? No, gentlemen, the real object of the application of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act is not to protect society against the threats and intimidation of the non-co-operators, but to crush the Congress and the Non-co-operation movement. It is to such threat that you have to return an answer.

GOVERNMENT OBJECT.

There is another object which the Government has in view: it is to make by threat, intimidation

and coercion, the visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Calcutta a success. On your behalf I would respectfully lay before His Royal Highness our wishes of good-will to him personally. There is no quarrel between us and the Royal House of England; but he comes here as the ambassador of a power with which we have decided not to co-operate; as such we cannot receive him. Also, we are in no mood to take part in any rejoicing. We are fighting for our national existence, for the recognition of our elementary rights freely to live our own life and solve our own destiny according to our lights. It would be sheer hypocrisy on our part to extend a national welcome to the ambassador of the Power that would deny us our elementary rights. There is in the refusal to extend a national welcome to His Royal Highness, no disrespect either to him or to the Royal House of England. There is only a determination not to co-operate with the Bureau of War.



323.2:DAS



5754

